

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT - ALTURAS FIELD OFFICE

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DOCUMENTATION

A. Background

BLM Office: Alturas Field Office CA320

Case File No.: CA320-NEPA-10-01

Proposed Action Title/Type: **Aerial Sage-Grouse Surveys**

Location of Proposed Action:

The survey area includes:

Mount Diablo Base Meridian

Township 35 North, Range 14 and 15 East

Township 36 North, Range 9, 10, 14, and 15 East

Township 37 North, Range 9, 10, 14, and 15 East

Township 40 North, Range 13 and 14 East

Township 41 North, Range 13 and 14 East

See Map 1

The survey area encompasses over 96,000 acres within Modoc and Lassen Counties. The majority of the lands are managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Alturas Field Office (AFO) and also includes Forest Service and private lands.

Description of Proposed Action:

The proposed action includes conducting aerial sage-grouse surveys using fix-wing aircraft within the three survey areas identified in Map 1. The BLM AFO would utilize a private biologist firm to conduct the aerial surveys. The firm would conduct surveys in compliance with the *Wildlife Survey Protocol* developed by the Powder River Basin Wildlife Taskforce (BLM-Buffalo, Wyoming Field Office, 2005). Wildlife Survey Protocol includes the following;

- 1) Conducting surveys during the male peak attendance (April 1 to May 15)
- 2) Conducting surveys three times for each survey area (minimum of 7-10 days apart)
- 3) Conducting surveys from approximately half an hour before to one hour after sunrise
- 4) Conducting follow-up ground surveys

B. Land Use Plan Conformance

This action conforms to the Alturas Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Record of Decision (ROD), approved on April 17, 2008 because it is consistent with the RMP objectives.

C. Compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with H-1790-1-NEPA Handbook, Appendix 3, pursuant to 516 DM 2, Appendix 1 which includes the following:

- 1.6. Nondestructive data collections, inventory (including field, aerial and satellite surveying and mapping), study, research and monitoring activities.

D. Signature

This categorical exclusion is appropriate for this action because there are no extraordinary circumstances having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The proposed action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 516 DM 2, Appendix 2 apply (see attached).

The proposed action has been scoped by an interdisciplinary team of specialists in the Alturas Field Office and there were no issues or unresolved conflicts identified with the proposed action. After review of the above possible exemptions by an interdisciplinary team of specialists, I have determined that the above described project is a categorical exclusion, in conformance with the Alturas RMP, and does not require further NEPA analysis.

Timothy J. Burke
Field Manager

Date

E. Contact

For more information, contact Arlene Koscic at (530) 233-7903

Attachments:

Exhibit A, Map 1

Review of Extraordinary Circumstances

The Department of the Interior Manual 516 2.3A (3) requires review of the following “extraordinary circumstances” (516 DM 2, Appendix 2) to determine if an otherwise categorically excluded action would require additional environmental analysis/documentation.

Would the proposed action: (YES or NO)

- 1) Have significant impacts on public health or safety.

☐ Yes ☒ No

Date:

Comments:

- 2) Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.

☐ Yes ☒ No

Date:

Comments:

- 3) Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)].

☐ Yes ☒ No

Date:

Comments:

-
- 4) Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.
[] Yes [X] No
Date:
Comments:
- 5) Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.
[] Yes [X] No
Date:
Comments:
- 6) Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.
[] Yes [X] No
Date:
Comments:
- 7) Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office.
[] Yes [X] No
Date:
Comments:
- 8) Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat.
[] Yes [X] No
Date:
Comments:
- 9) Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.
[] Yes [X] No
Date:
Comments:
- 10) Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).
[] Yes [X] No
Date:
Comments:
-

11) Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007).

[] Yes [X] No

Date:

Comments:

12) Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).

[] Yes [X] No

Date:

Comments:

Reviewers:

Invasive Species

Date

Cultural Resources

Date

Wildlife

Date

Botany/Riparian/Soil, Water & Air

Date

Decision Record for a Categorically Excluded Action

A. Background

BLM Office: Alturas Field Office CA320

Lease/Serial/Case File No.: CA320-NEPA-09-29

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B. Compliance with Laws, Regulations, Policies and Land Use Plans

This proposed action is subject to the Alturas Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Record of Decision (ROD), approved on April 17, 2008. The proposed action has been determined to be in conformance with this plan as required by regulation 43 CFR 1610.5-3a.

The proposed action is also in compliance with the following;

- Sage Steppe Ecosystem Restoration Strategy Final Environmental Impact Statement (USDA/USDI 2008)
- Conservation Strategy for Sage-Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) and Sagebrush Ecosystems within the Buffalo-Skedaddle Population Management Unit (Northern California Sage-grouse Working Group 2006)
- BLM Manual 6840-(Rels 1-116)-Special Status Species Management

C. Administrative Remedies

Administrative remedies may be available to those who believe they will be adversely affected by this decision. Appeals may be made to the Office of Hearings and Appeals, Office of the Secretary, U.S. Department of Interior, Board of Land Appeals (Board) in strict compliance with the regulations in 43 CFR Part 4. Notices of appeal must be filed in this office within 30 days after publication of this decision. If a notice of appeal does not include a statement of reasons, such statement must be filed with this office and the Board within 30 days after the notice of appeal is filed. The notice of appeal and any statement of

reasons, written arguments, or briefs must also be served upon the Regional Solicitor, Pacific Southwest Region, U.S. Department of Interior, 2800 Cottage Way, E-1712, Sacramento, CA 95825.

D. Decision

After review of the above possible exemptions it is my finding that the proposed action as described above qualifies as a categorical exclusion and further environmental analysis is not required. It is my decision to implement the proposed action as described.

Approved By:

Timothy J. Burke
Alturas Field Manager

Date

Map 1. Aerial Sage-Grouse Survey Project Location and Land Ownership

Aerial Sage-Grouse Survey Area



1:334,160

Created By: Arlene Kovic
BLM Alturas Field Office
November 10, 2009
DRAFT

